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PROPOSALS FOR COMMERCIAL GROWTH

A H O S K I E

NORTH CAROLINA

## INTRODUCTION

The ability of the business community of Ahoskie to continue year after year to fulfill the commercial needs of its citizens depends greatly on the individual merchant and his ability to recognize the needs of his present and potential customers.

Geographically, Ahoskie is situated in the center of an area that provides a minimum of competition for its merchants. However, with the mobility of the public increasing each year, the once "captive" consumer is steadily extending the distance he will travel to do comparative shopping, especially for major items. Ahoskie businessmen must increasingly compete with facilities offered in Roanoke Rapids, Rocky Mount, Elizabeth City and Norfolk.

To prosper, the smaller community must be prepared to offer a good selection of merchandise; and this merchandise must be displayed in a conveniently organized and attractive business community.

This publication proposes solutions to some of the basic physical problems of the business community. These recommendations, if developed, will generate an efficient and attractive shopping facility to serve the needs of the individuals that live and work in the Ahoskie area.

## DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The sketch map represents the general planning proposals for the downtown business area. These proposals may be considered as ideal solutions, but each proposed change offers an improvement for the customer and the business community.

The following is a list of goals that were used in developing this plan:

**PARKING:** Provide adequate amounts of off-street parking convenient to the shopping businesses.

**PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION:** Develop convenient pedestrian circulation patterns and areas that will safely separate shoppers and moving vehicles.

**BUILDING SPACE:** Provide space for expansion and new businesses by removing obsolete and dilapidated structures.

**TRAFFIC:** Provide efficient vehicular traffic controls, circulation patterns and access routes to and around the business community.

**APPEARANCE:** Improve overall appearance of the business community by landscaping and cleaning and remodeling of buildings.

**CHARACTER:** Develop the downtown in such a manner that a positive character will be established and thus provide Ahoskie with a unique identity.

## EXISTING FUNCTIONAL AREAS

### LEGEND



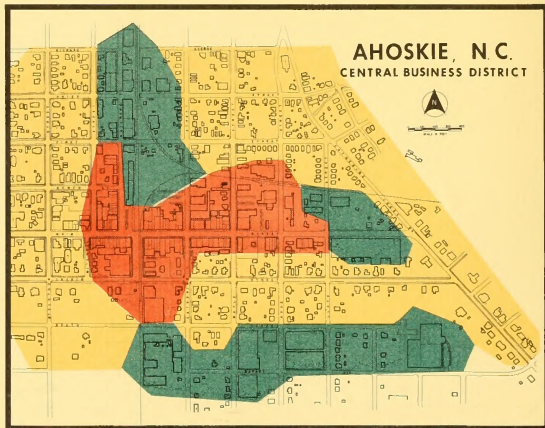
COMMERCIAL



WHOLESALE &  
INDUSTRIAL



RESIDENTIAL







## AHOSKIE, N.C.

## CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

### LAND-USE

The central area of Ahoskie has many different activities, but basically it is a trade and business center. The growth pattern of the business and trade activities can be seen on the land-use map above. Retail trade activities have developed along Main Street; wholesale businesses have located to the north near the railroad and on the south of Church Street; the tobacco warehouse dominates the east side of the downtown area; and the west end of the central area provides a buffer of churches and homes that gradually terminates the downtown business area.

The general configuration of development can be seen on the opposite page.

### EXISTING LAND USE MAP

#### LEGEND

- PRIMARY RETAIL
- SECONDARY RETAIL
- CONVENIENCE RETAIL
- CUSTOMER SERV. & REPAIR
- ADMIN., FIN. & ADV.
- SOCIAL & CULTURAL
- WHOLESALE & INDUST. SERV.
- RESIDENTIAL
- VACANT BUILDINGS

## PROJECTS FOR DEVELOPMENT

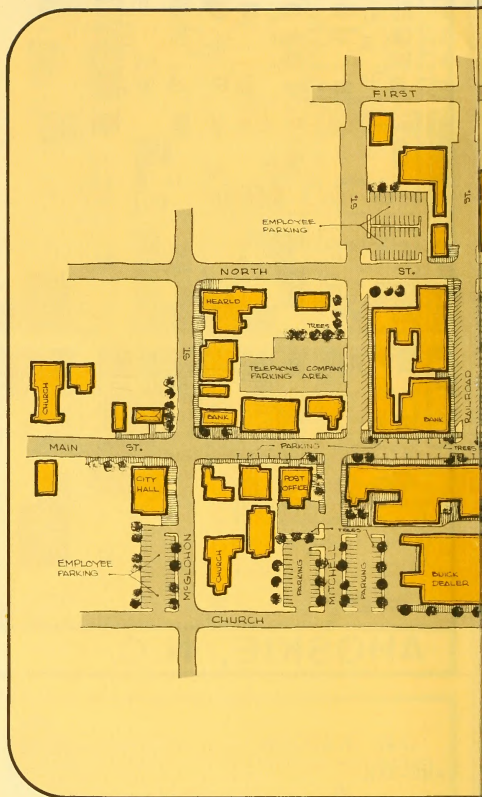
Listed below are specific projects that should be of immediate concern to the merchants and property owners of the downtown area. The opposite sketch plan shows in some detail the location of the various projects mentioned.

**MAIN STREET:** Eliminate on-street parking on corners and mid-block areas to allow for the development of landscaped crosswalks with trees, shrubs and benches on Main Street. Only fourteen parking spaces will be eliminated to make this improvement.

**OFF-STREET LOTS:** Customer parking should be provided behind the stores on the south side of Main Street between Catherine Street and Rhue Street. This can be done between the houses on Church Street and the businesses on Main Street. Two bays of parking should be developed on the east side of Maple Street across from the present Belk's lot. Two lots should be provided behind the post office on each side of Mitchell Street. A double parking bay should be developed behind the cleaners on south Catherine Street with access from Church Street. A parking lot for employees should be developed on North Street next to the hardware store.

**RAILROAD PARKING:** Improve and reorganize the area to the rear of the Ahooskie Department Store. New paving, line markings, and tree planting should be fully developed. This area could be substantially enlarged if one of the spur tracks (350 feet) of the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad were removed and developed as parking.

**REAR ENTRANCES:** All stores and businesses that front on Main Street should consider developing and improving their rear entrances as the off-street parking lots are constructed. These improvements should include building renovation, paving materials, lighting, and landscaping.

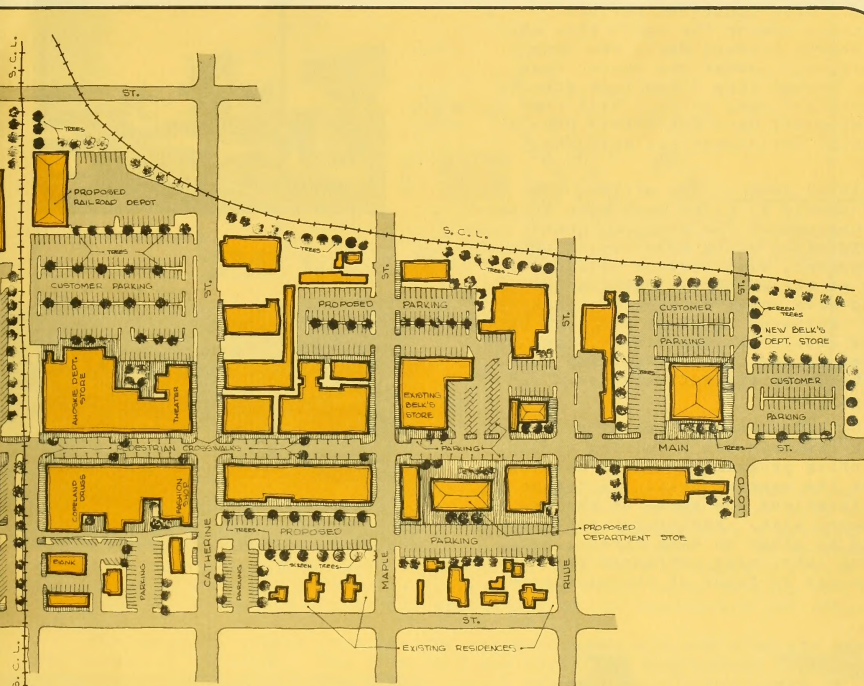


## PROPOSED



EXISTING BU  
PROPOSED BU

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# DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT

BUILDINGS  
BUILDINGS



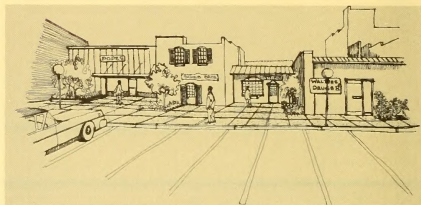
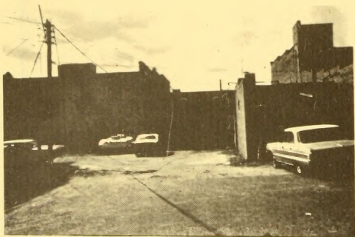
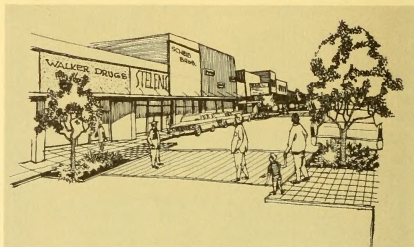
STREETS  
AND PARKING



**NEW STRUCTURES:** Vacant land for new downtown commercial construction is scarce. Good locations for new structures are on the south side of Main Street between Maple and Rhue Streets, and across the street next to the barber shop. The lots directly north and east of City Hall are both marginal uses and should have a potential for commercial building sites.

**PEDESTRIAN AREAS:** The walking customer should be given much more attention throughout the downtown area. The sidewalks along Main Street should be improved, with widened walking areas at the corners. Parking lots should have walks between the parking bays. Entrance areas at the rear of stores should provide direct, convenient access from the parking lots, and should be attractively paved and landscaped.

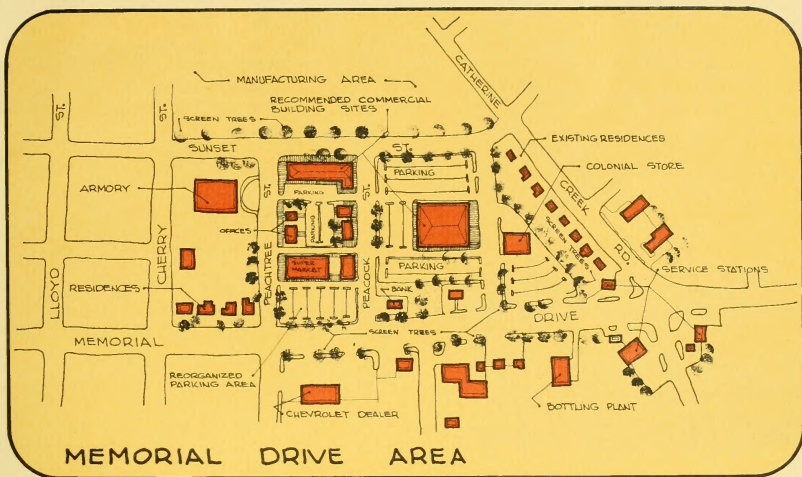
**LANDSCAPING:** The absence of greenery in the downtown has a dulling effect. A planting program should be developed for the central area. Tentative tree locations are shown on the development plan. Particular attention should be given to Main Street, large parking lots, rear entrances and setback areas in front of businesses.



**U. S. HIGHWAY 13:** Commercial development on U. S. 13 is confined to two areas. The north area consists of a restaurant, two motels, a service station and a supermarket. The restaurant and motels are well landscaped and do not need any improvements. The service station and supermarket both lack any greenery and are in need of general landscaping improvements.

The area at the intersection of U. S. 13 and Main Street has two service stations that would be much improved in appearance if some landscape effort was made.

These businesses often are the only representation of Ahoskie that a traveler on U. S. 13 sees as he passes through the community. Consequently these businesses should give their best appearance.



**MEMORIAL DRIVE:** At present the commercial development on Memorial Drive is much disorganized. The businesses on the south side of the Drive have new curb cuts and pull-off areas for automobiles. The stores have a setback from the highway, but are in bad need of trees and shrubs. It is recommended that a tree planting program be developed that will ultimately result in the lining of Memorial Drive with trees. These trees would develop continuity along the Drive and soften the appearance of the businesses and automobiles.

The shopping center area has the greatest prospects and also the greatest number of problems. The scattered and unrelated development in this area has somewhat fragmented the potential area for development, and is producing a very inconvenient shopping facility. The sketch plan above demonstrates some possibilities for improvement and general organization of parking areas, vehicular circulation, new store locations and tree planting locations to pull the area together as one unit. If good development is to occur, an overall look at this entire area must be given and coordination among land owners, builders and business operators must be worked out for the mutual benefit of all.



Businessmen and Property Owners

- 1) Each businessman and property owner should take a critical look at his place of business as to both interior and exterior appearance and initiate a long-range program to improve each structure in the business district.
- 2) Downtown merchants should participate in acquiring land to develop additional off-street parking lots.
- 3) Employers and employees should make all "close in" parking spaces available by parking on the fringes of the commercial areas.
- 4) On-street improvements such as trees and general landscaping should be financed in part or wholly by the adjacent business property owners.
- 5) Rear entrances of businesses should be improved or developed for downtown properties to encourage off-street parking.
- 6) Merchants and property owners in the Memorial Boulevard shopping center should work as a group in order to bring some unity to the complex through future development.
- 7) The merchants should organize to promote the business community as a unified shopping facility and encourage simultaneous sales with area-wide advertisement.

Town Government

- 1) The Town should continue and broaden its policy of developing off-street parking areas.
- 2) The Town should cooperate with merchants in developing on-street improvements such as tree planting, sidewalk improvements, and pedestrian crosswalks.
- 3) The Town should participate in efforts to effect the removal of the southern spur track, across from the present depot, in order to expand the existing off-street parking.
- 4) The municipal government must be sympathetic toward efforts of improvement within the downtown and fringe areas, giving assistance and encouragement whenever possible.
- 5) The basic vehicular circulation system within the community must be properly maintained for easy access. Improvements of roads into and around the Town in conjunction with the development of the Town's thoroughfare plan should be promoted as rapidly as possible. Convenient access to and around the town should not be overlooked as a major benefit to the business community.

## PREPARED FOR THE TOWN OF AHOSKIE, NORTH CAROLINA

TOWN COMMISSIONERS

Mayor  
Charles I. Pierce  
  
Odie Bracy, Jr.  
Julian W. Robertson, Jr.  
John C. White  
J. C. Sessoms, Sr.  
James M. Joyner

PLANNING BOARD

J. B. Linkous	Alvin Newsome
Sam Farmer	Chester Rawls
J. C. Wilroy, Jr.	Hugh Bazemore
Harold McCoy	J. T. Nowell
Joe Parker	G. Thomas Bazemore
Sherman Hall	

MERCHANT REPRESENTATIVES

Town Manager	Linwood Britten	Malcom Copeland
Alvin Kornegay, Jr.	W. T. Modlin	Earl Capps
	Norvin Garrett	

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE BY:

THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT  
DIVISION OF COMMUNITY PLANNING